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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Monday, February 17, 1936

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "HOMEMADE ROLLS FOR COMPANY." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, United States Department of Agriculture.

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If letters from listeners are any indication, I would judge that a good many modern housekeepers are taking up the old art of yeast bread making -- in a small way at least. For example, here's a young housekeeper who says she would just love to treat her new in-laws to her own homemade rolls when they come to dinner next time. And here's another listener who says she'll be my friend for life if I can tell her how to make envelope rolls such as her husband used to have at home.

You know, once upon a time a housekeeper was judged by the bread she made. And as sure as baking day came around -- that is, Saturday -- she turned out loaves to supply her family for a week and probably rolls and biscuits beside. Nowadays housekeepers buy most of the bread-supply for the family, but now and then for a treat or for company, they make rolls or biscuits.

Suppose for the sake of the listeners who have inquired, we go into the matter of yeast-bread making today. Using wheat flour and yeast and fat in the bread mixture, you have an elastic dough which will rise and which you bake into a loaf with a light spongy texture. But as every housekeeper knows who has tried it, you get a very different result with any other grain. The reason is that wheat contains 2 proteins, which, with water, develop into gluten. We make bread with liquid -- usually with milk or water -- so we have gluten in any bread mixture containing wheat flour. And gluten is the substance responsible for that elasticity in dough -- in fact, for its rising as it does. By itself, gluten is stringy and bakes into a tough hard substance. The more you stir batter or knead dough, the thicker and tougher and more elastic it becomes. But, when you add leavening, the dough stretches or rises. And the fat in the bread mixture keeps the gluten from forming strings that would make the bread tough.

Leavening makes bread rise because it produces gas in the dough. With just the right bread mixture and just the right amount of kneading, the gas bubbles spread all through the dough and expand it evenly. The result is a sponge-like mass of millions of little cells filled with gas. The gas expands with heat, stretching the dough until it is ready to be set by baking. This gas is carbon dioxide, given off when yeast is growing. The same gas forms when you mix baking powder, or soda and sour milk, or soda and some other acid with liquid and flour.

Yeast leavens or lightens dough by causing a fermentation in it. The yeast is really a form of plant life -- a living fungus. Like any other living thing, it needs moisture and food, which it gets in the dough. When you warm the dough, the yeast starts growing. That is why you put the dough in a warm place "to rise." As the yeast grows, its cells multiply. But this process takes some hours. And that is no doubt why housekeepers find it so much easier and quicker to buy their bread, made at a bakery.

However, yeast rolls aren't hard to make at home, especially if you make what we call "refrigerator rolls." They don't take a great deal of time, considering how delicious the result is. To have them any day, you can set the dough to rise the day before and stop the rising at the proper point by putting the dough in the refrigerator or in a cold room -- never cold enough to freeze, of course. You can shape the dough into rolls, set them in the pan, and put the pan in the refrigerator. Take them out of the refrigerator next day; let them rise again for about three-quarters of an hour or even less; then put them in the oven for 15 or 20 minutes of baking.

You can keep dough in the refrigerator in this arrested state for a week or more and use it as needed. But here's a point to remember. When you plan to hold dough in the refrigerator a few days, allow a generous amount of sugar in the recipe, for the dough loses sweetness on standing.

Well, now. Here's a recipe for refrigerator rolls that should be the answer to those listeners who want to please husbands, or in-laws or guests by serving homemade hot rolls. Quick rolls for company meals, you might call these.

The recipe calls for 8 ingredients. If you have a good memory, perhaps you can take these ingredients down in your mind. Otherwise, you'll probably want a pencil. The ingredients are: 1 cake of compressed yeast..... one-fourth cup of lukewarm water.... one-half cup of fat.... one-half cup of sugar.... 1 egg.... 1 and one-half cup of scalded milk.... and 3 cups of sifted flour. I'll read that list once more. (Repeat.)

You make the rolls like this. First, soften the yeast in the lukewarm water. Then, add about 1 teaspoon of the sugar. Cream the fat. Add the sugar, then the well-beaten egg, and then the cooled milk. Finally, add the yeast. Stir in the sifted flour and salt until the dough is stiff enough to knead. Toss on a floured board and knead from 10 to 15 minutes -- or until the dough is smooth and elastic. Put the dough in a greased bowl. Grease the surface of the dough. Keep on a warm place until it doubles its bulk. Turn on the board, and knead. Again grease the surface of the dough, cover it and put it in the refrigerator. When you are ready to make rolls, cut off the amount of dough you need. Shape the rolls and put them in a warm place to double in bulk. Then bake from 15 to 20 minutes in a hot oven.

There, listeners, that dough mixture will keep well for 3 or 4 days or even a week in your refrigerator. And as I said, I've suggested a generous amount of sugar because the mixture loses sweetness as it stands.

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